

Twenty-Five Years After 9/11, Lower Manhattan Is Both a Tribute and a Promise



ADWEEK House: Advertising HQ brings the people shaping advertising, commerce, and media together for four days of unscripted conversations and after-hours connections. **Meet us in Midtown, Oct. 5–8.**

On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, I stood on Hudson Street watching in shock as WTC 1 fell.

That image is seared into my brain.

In the days and years that followed, the future of New York City's Financial District seemed bleak. Nobody would want to go back there, the thinking went. The wound was too deep.

There was an open scar in the middle of the city, a 16-acre void we called "the pit," spanned by temporary pedestrian

bridges. For a long time, it felt like nothing could rise from it.

But then, the steel started to climb. One World Trade finally broke street level and inched toward the skyline. Over the course of a decade, New York City did what it does best: move forward without forgetting.

In 2013, WPP took a chance. Our global media collective GroupM—now called WPP Media—signed one of the first long-term leases at 3 World Trade Center, at the time the largest new office commitment in a World Trade Center building. It was an investment in a vision that Larry Silverstein, who led redevelopment of the site, and Mayor Michael Bloomberg were determined to see come to fruition.

Other corporations including Condé Nast, Spotify, and Fast Company also came to plant their flags downtown.

With them came restaurants, young residents, culture—an organic gravitational pull. Lower Manhattan's population has doubled since 2000, according to the New York State Comptroller, and the Financial District saw the biggest rise in apartment searches of any neighborhood across the five boroughs in 2025 on StreetEasy.

I often think about what it means to work at the World Trade Center.

I pass the memorial pools on my way to the office every morning, where families and tourists stand in reflection. The Oculus is visible from my office window, and to enter it is to stand inside the ribs of something ancient and alive—a daily reminder of where I am.

In our industry, it's easy to get caught up in the stress of the job. But then the weight of what happened here hits, a reminder to not take a single day for granted.

I also think of this place as the embodiment of resilience, powered by creativity.

Architects, developers, and city planners had to rebuild Lower Manhattan to honor the lives lost, while empowering a community to feel hopeful about the future. Creativity is the ultimate act of optimism. Imagination, collaboration, design, are gestures toward tomorrow.

Lower Manhattan is a living, breathing tribute where people work, create, and live every single day. A place forever anchored by remembrance, yet surrounded by hope.

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